

Message Text

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13

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 OC-01 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 EB-07 H-01 INR-05 IO-10 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 RSC-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00

SY-04 FAA-00 WRD-01 SCCT-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 /075 W

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O P 221030Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 2256

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE NIACT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

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3.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJ: HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT IN DUBAI

1. BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL IN DUBAI ARMITAGE GAVE US FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRLINER IN DUBAI IN EARLY MORNING HOURS OF NOVEMBER 22.

2. AIRCRAFT WAS ON LONDON-BEIRUT-DUBAI ITINERARY BOUND EASTWARD FROM DUBAI. TRANSIT PASSENGERS AS WELL AS CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT HAD JUST DISEMBARKED FROM AIRCRAFT WHEN THREE ARABS BURST INTO TARMAC FIRING AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND RUSHED TOWARD AIRCRAFT. THEY HAD APPARENTLY CLIMBED OVER AIRPORT SECURITY FENCE. EYEWITNESSES SAY TERRORISTS SEEMED TO BE FIRING INTO AIR, BUT IN PROCESS TWO CIVILIANS WERE WOUNDED. ONE WAS INDIAN AIRHOSTESS FROM BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT (NOT SERIOUSLY WOUNDED). THE SECOND WAS LOCAL AIRPORT SWEEPER WHO WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. THIS HAPPENED AT 0040 HOURS.

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3. HAVING BOARDED AIRCRAFT AND SEIZED CO-PILOT AND CREW IN COCK-
PIT, TERRORISTS PASSED DEMAND THROUGH CO-PILOT THAT AIRCRAFT BE
REFUELED AND CAPTAIN BE IMMEDIATELY SENT ON BOARD. IN THREE
HOUR PERIOD THAT ENSUED BEFORE AIRCRAFT FINALLY TOOK OFF, AIRCRAFT
PERSONNEL ON GROUND AND AIRPORT SECURITY PEOPLE ON HAND PLAYED
FOR TIME TO ALLOW CHIEF OF POLICE MAJOR JACK BRIGGS AND UAE DEFENSE
MINISTER SHAIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID TO ARRIVE ON SCENE. TO SPEED
THINGS UP, TERRORISTS MADE VARIOUS THREATS, ALL RELAYED BY CO-PILOT,
INCLUDING HOLDING A PISTOL AT HEADS OF PASSENGERS AND CREW
MEMBERS, THREAT TO SET THE AIRCRAFT ON FIRE, THREAT TO KILL THE
PASSENGERS, AND AT ONE POINT, PIN FROM GRENADE WAS PULLED TO
REINFORCE THEIR SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE. CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT FINALLY
BOARDED AND AIRCRAFT WAS REFUELED. NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONDUCTED BY
CHIEF OF POLICE AND SHAIKH MOHAMMED. DECISION WAS MADE NOT TO TRY
TO FORCIBLY DETAIN THE AIRCRAFT FROM TAKING OFF. AIRCRAFT TOOK
OFF AT 0349 WITH ESTIMATED 27 PASSENGERS ON BOARD AND MOST OF TEN
MAN CREW. 48 PASSENGERS WERE LEFT IN TRANSIT LOUNGE. ARRANGEMENTS
NOW BEING MADE TO FIND THEM ONWARD TRANSPORTATION.

4. TERRORISTS SPOKE ENGLISH AND ARABIC OVER AIRCRAFT RADIO, BUT
OTHERWISE GAVE NO CLUE AS TO THEIR NATIONALITY OR AFFILIATION.
THROUGHOUT DIALOGUE WITH SECURITY FORCES IN DUBAI, THEY MADE NO
DEMANDS EXCEPT THAT CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT BE SENT BACK ON BOARD,
AND THAT AIRCRAFT BE REFUELED AND ALLOWED TO TAKE OFF.

5. WHEN AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF NO DESTINATION WAS GIVEN AIR CONTROLLERS
IN DUBAI, BUT SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN AIRCRAFT AND
GROUND MADE IT CLEAR THAT TERRORISTS HAD INSTRUCTED CAPTAIN TO
HEAD FOR BEIRUT. AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW BEIRUT AT ABOUT 0700 THIS
MORNING AND HEADED WEST. CAIRO AIRPORT REPORTEDLY WAS DECLARED OPEN
TO RECEIVE AIRCRAFT BUT HIJACKERS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO PROCEED
TO TRIPOLI. ARMITAGE SAID THAT FCO HAD INSTRUCTED ITS EMBASSY IN
LIBYA TO REQUEST LIBYAN AUTHORITIES NOT TO CLOSE TRIPOLI AIRPORT
TO AIRCRAFT.

6. BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL HAD NO DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF NATIONALITY
OF PASSENGERS. EYEWITNESSES STATE THEY APPEAR TO BE MOSTLY INDIAN.
WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CHECK AS TO WHETHER ANY US CITIZENS AMONG
THEM. IN ANY CASE NO PASSENGERS HAD BEEN INJURED AS OF TIME AIR-
CRAFT TOOK OFF FROM DUBAI.

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7. DURING ATTACK ON AIRCRAFT A SEABOARD WORLD AIRLINES CARGO PLANE
WHICH WAS PARKED ON TARMAC NEARBY SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE FROM
AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE. AFTER REPAIRS, CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT STATED
THAT DAMAGE WAS SLIGHT, AND CONTINUED ON HIS SCHEDULED FLIGHT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIRCRAFT HIJACKING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ABUDH01599
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740338-0973
From: ABU DHABI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741122/aaaaaryk.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT IN DUBAI
TAGS: EAIR, UK, TC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005